

## Marizel Reyes Evangelista

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Photos by Seema Marwaha

**M**arizel is a live-in caregiver and has worked for the Meister family of Toronto since 2006.

I started working for Mrs. Meister in April of 2006. She passed in 2007. She treated me like family. A few months before she died, she asked me to get a notebook and record the meals her husband liked to eat, the way he liked to be cared for. Right before she died, Mr. Meister said to me, “I know my wife is going to pass. I want you to take care of me the rest of my life.” I promised him I would. I knew that is what Mrs. Meister would have wanted me to do. We take care of each other. He misses her. I miss her too.

I never had a good employer before Mrs. Meister. She treated me like family. I used to have a restaurant in the Philippines. I left so I could support my family. My employer in Macau was abusive both physically and emotionally. My next

employer in Israel made me feel unsafe — I couldn’t sleep there at night out of fear, and he would not provide me with food other than what he left on his plate. I would go days without eating. I went to Jerusalem to see the Wailing Wall. I wrote down my prayers on a piece of paper and left it there. Soon after I was sponsored and able to come to Canada.

My family is all in Canada now. I have four kids of my own who depend on me. They understand that Mr. Meister needs me. That I can’t go home often. We celebrate Christmas now each year at Mr. Meister’s home. I didn’t want to ask him to put up a tree, as he is Jewish. But last year I asked if I could put one up in the basement. He

insisted we have a big tree, right in the middle of the living room. And he would sing Christmas carols every day.

Mama means grandfather in the Philippines. My children call Mr. Meister grandfather. We are so lucky to have him in our lives.

**We take care  
of each other.**

